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NORTH AMERICAN REVIEW

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THE OLD YEAR AND THE NEW

NEVER before within our recollection have the American people been so fully warranted as now in confronting a New Year with the confidence begotten of faith in the great Republic. Never have they been more firmly knit together in mind and soul. Never have their feet been placed more fixedly upon the solid foundations of popular sovereignty. Never were their heads higher, their vision clearer, their prospects brighter. Well, indeed, as with Hezekiah of old, may their hearts be lifted up in joyful anticipation!

We laugh at the doles of dolts who foresee disaster in embarrassment of riches. Grant that we have problems, difficult and grave, to solve! Have we not the wherewithal in men and money? In spirit purified by flame? In wisdom born of seeing? In courage sprung from gallant deeds performed? In unity? In singlemindedness? In mutual understanding?

Surely no land ever leaped so quickly into comprehension of itself as this of ours in the year now drawing to a close. A short twelvemonth ago a Gulliver bound seemingly fast by official Lilliputians, sluggish, fat, incapable, derided; today, the fetters broken, a giant among nations, erect, alert, efficient, respected, ennobled by its baptism of fire, its sacrifices, its generosity, its fidelity to truth, its devotion to humanity! Assuredly a transformation of humans worthy of the gods! A wonderful, wonderful year!

It has been much more than a four years' war. We may omit prologue, preface, foreword, introduction; the generations of prenatal poisoning of the twentieth century Hun.

Even so, we must date not the origin but the organization of Germany's design to achieve the conquest of the world at January 18, 1871, nearly forty-eight years ago. The place was the Hall of Mirrors at Versailles, in the palace of the old French kings, conquered and occupied by the invading Germans. The occasion was the proclamation of William von Hohenzollern, King of Prussia, as "Deutsches Kaiser," thus recreating the Germanic empire under the autocratic headship of the successor of the most ruthless of those old robber barons who waged war solely for pillage and for conquest. Forty days later, lacking one, an earnest of the predatory purpose of the new empire was given in the demand that France, as a penalty for being beaten, surrender to the Hunnish conqueror two provinces and one billion dollars in gold. With that the war was on: The Hun against humanity.

"Go forth, my son," said Oxenstiern, "and see with how little wisdom the world is governed." With how little vision men regard the progress of affairs was shown in that civilized peoples, our own among them, largely applauded the rise of the Hohenzollern empire as auspicious of peace and progress in the world.

The next significant date was that of June 15, 1888. On that day William the Damned succeeded to the Prussian and German thrones.

There followed a quarter century of such hypocrisy, intrigues and insidious aggression as the world never before had known; so shrewdly camouflaged that down to the very end it deceived the vast majority of the unvisioned world. In all sobriety and mature advisement it may be estimated that if a poll of humanity had been obtainable at any time before midsummer of 1914, a vast majority of mankind would have expressed confidence in the German Emperor and in the German Empire as pacific in purpose and as an irenic bulwark of the world. A few voices were raised in warning, here and there; only to be decried and condemned like that of Laocoon. It is to be remembered grimly that responsible British statesmen threatened to deprive Lord Roberts of his pension if he did not refrain from urging the need of preparation for defence against a German attack. "Go forth, my son; and see with how little vision the world is governed."

At Serajevo, in a province which Austria had stolen

and held subject, an Austrian subject assassinated the Heir Presumptive to the Austrian throne, on June 29, 1914. The unvisioned world regarded that as nothing but one of the not unusual incidents in the business of sovereignty; not being awakened even by the indications that the tragedy had been half anticipated at Vienna and Berlin, and was regarded at those capitals with satisfaction ill concealed behind pretensions of official wrath. But nearly a month later, on July 24, came the awakening shock of an Austrian ultimatum to Serbia, couched in terms of such insolent arrogance as the world had not heard before. There were a few days of agitated diplomacy, the purport of which was not even yet appreciated by the half-awakened world; ending on August 1 with Germany's declaration of war against Russia, and her invasion of Luxemburg and ultimatum to Belgium preparatory to her attack upon France.

The storm had broken. In what plight did it find the world? "Never for one moment," writes Professor John Bach McMaster, "had Germany intended to keep the peace." There is documentary proof that before the assassination at Serajevo the German Government took steps toward beginning war that very summer, and that early in July, more than a fortnight before the Austrian ultimatum to Serbia, the definite decision for the war was made in Berlin. In consequence, Germany began the war in the completest possible state of preparation. All others, France, Russia, Great Britain, were unprepared and were taken by surprise, with a single exception. The British fleet was ready; and it saved the world. Indeed, all still unrealized by the majority of mankind, the world had within a few weeks triple salvation. The British fleet held the high seas against the Hun. The little Belgian army at Liège and the little British army at Mons, by courting self-destruction delayed the onrush of the Hunnish hordes for the few days needed to enable some little preparation on the part of France. And then France, with British aid, achieved the Miracle of the Marne. Thereafter through weary years the Allies held the line for freedom and humanity, until America should enter by their side.

What of America? Our annals bear no more astounding chapters than those which tell of our early attitude toward the war; our persistent unpreparedness; our purposed blindness to the issues and to the menace; our astound-

ing tolerance of the enemy within our gates; the puerile pretence that we should be neutral in thought as well as in word and deed, and should not so much as concern ourselves to know what the war was all about; our indifference to the rape of Belgium, to the scrapping of treaties and international law; our national echoing of the pseudo-exculpatory demand of the world's first murderer, "Am I my brother's keeper?" Even the *Lusitania* massacre, away back on May 7, 1915, failed to rouse us from the lethargic obsession of keeping out of war. "Go forth, my son, and see with how little vision the world is governed."

But the crisis had to come at last. It was on February 3, 1917, that diplomatic relations were severed with Germany, and that the treacherous criminal who had made the German Embassy at Washington the centre of hostile plots against the United States, was sent home to his master. Two months later the climax was reached. On April 2 the President recommended and on April 6 Congress voted recognition of the state of war which Germany had long before practically instituted against us. But not yet was the nation fully awake. The unpreparedness of years, the happy-go-lucky habits of thought and action, the sordidness of many, and even the potential treason of not a few, hampered and all but hamstrung the nation as it struggled to arise to its vital needs. There was an army to be created. There were rifles and cannon and airplanes and what not to be manufactured. There was the whole industrial and commercial system of the nation to be reorganized on a war basis. And all had to be done in the face of pacifism in high places and Bolshevism in low places.

It was done. But it was done with agonizing slowness, while those who had for three years been our defenders and our saviors stood with their backs to the wall in a last desperate resolve to do or die. After the formal declaration of war it was nearly seven months, it was October 27, before the first shot was fired at the foe by Americans under the American flag at the war front. It was a week later, on November 3, that the first American lives, under the American flag were sacrificed in the great war that democracy and civilization might live. Enright, Gresham, Hay: Let their names be held in everlasting remembrance.

Even then our war dragged wearily. The official head of our military establishment regarded it as three thousand

miles away and therefore as not demanding any specially energetic or expeditious efforts. Not until we had been engaged in it all but a year did we begin to make our presence really felt. It was on March 21, 1918, that the Battle of Picardy, the Beginning of the End, began; and one week later General Pershing placed under Marshal Foch's command all the American forces then in France. They were not many, but they counted; and thereafter their numbers were swiftly swelled, as the "bridge of ships," protected by the British fleet and by our own, bore an incessant stream of American soldiers flowing eastward, ever eastward. The summer saw scenes of glory: Belleau Wood, Chateau-Thierry, the second Marne, the St. Mihiel salient; until American guns were thundering at the walls of Metz, and from the Alps to the Silver Streak the "long battle came rolling on the foe." At the beginning of November there were 750,000 American soldiers fighting in the Argonne, and a million more behind their lines. On the morning of November 11, 1918, the Day of Days in the world's modern history, the United States had in France 78,391 officers and 1,881,376 men.

On that day, Germany surrendered.

It had cost us approximately 55,000 men killed and 180,000 wounded and missing; lighter losses by far than even little Belgium or Serbia suffered. Great Britain's casualties were more than thirty times as great as ours—3,049,991, of whom 658,665 were killed outright. French casualties were 2,719,642, of whom 559,612 were killed. The losses of Germany are still largely a matter of estimate. Well informed and conservative reckoning puts the total in killed, wounded and prisoners at nearly if not quite 7,000,000, of whom at least 1,800,000 were killed. The money cost of the war to all the belligerents has thus far been approximately \$200,000,000,000, or fifty times that of our Civil War. Of this cost probably one-eighth has fallen upon the United States, and by the time the treaty of peace is signed and all our troops are brought back home, our expense account will probably equal thirty billions.

A stupendous cost, that, in life and treasure; from one point of view to gratify the insane ambition of a criminal paranoiac, from another to abolish the fiction of "divine right" and to confirm forever the rights of man. Are they confirmed forever? We shall see what answer the Peace

Conference essays to make to that question. "Go forth, my son, and see with what wisdom the world applies its greatest and its costliest lesson."

THE DISSOLUTION OF THE GERMAN EMPIRE

SCARCELY any phase of the post-bellum situation in Central Europe is more auspicious than the impending dissolution of the German and Austro-Hungarian empires and the formation in their stead of a more or less numerous group of separate states. We refer now not to the creation of independent states from the non-Teutonic and non-Magyar peoples long held in bondage, but to the division of Teutonic Germany and perhaps of Austria, too, into such commonwealths. Such a consummation is devoutly to be desired, for generous as well as for retributive and prudential reasons.

Without mere exultation over the internecine quarrels among our enemies, however, there is this serious and important cause for gratification, that the dissolution of the German Empire abates the chief menace to the peace of the world. We must now recognize the fact, which formerly we tried so hard not to perceive, that from the very beginning that empire meant war. It had its origin in war. The war was provoked and fought for the sake of forming the empire, and then reciprocally the empire was formed and maintained for the sake of war. It is aggressive war of conquest and rapacity, too, with which the empire and before it the Prussian kingdom have been intimately and inseparably identified. We must bear in mind the historic fact that every war waged by Prussia or by the empire of which Prussia has been the head, from the time of Frederick miscalled the Great to the present has been a war deliberately and treacherously begun by that Power for the sake of seizing a neighbor's territory or exacting tribute, or both.

It is an interesting historical fact that Prussia, or the Hohenzollerns, did not seek and indeed would not accept the headship of the German Empire until that kingdom had grown so strong as to be able completely to dominate that organization. We must remember that away back in 1848 the German people through their chosen representatives offered the imperial crown to the King of Prussia, and that he declined it. Why? For two reasons. One was that the offer

came from the people and therefore if he had accepted it he would have been recognizing the right of the people to select their own rulers. He preferred to wait until he, or his successor, could take the crown without reference to the people, and could claim a "divine right." The other reason was, that Prussia was not yet big enough and strong enough to dominate the empire. He preferred to wait until in a couple of wars waged for the purpose Prussia could be aggrandized by the annexation of the Danish Provinces, Hanover, part of Saxony, and various other states, so that "German Empire" would be merely a euphemism for "Greater Prussia." It is interesting to recall that the then King of Prussia was the crowned criminal who distinguished himself with the official dictum: "All written constitutions are only scraps of paper"; thus giving to his last successor the cue for applying to international treaties the same contemptuous epithet.

But we must not blind ourselves to the great achievements of Germans in past generations and the immense contributions which they have made to human knowledge, human progress and human pleasure. But neither must we forget the fact that these things were done, and the great men who performed them were born and flourished, during the ages when there was a German Empire in name only, and when the Teutonic race was divided into a multitude of small states. Petty and contemptible as were those Dukedoms and Principalities from a military or political point of view, they developed culture, they developed men of spiritual vision, they achieved those deeds which caused it to be said that while France (under Napoleon) ruled the empire of the land and England (under Nelson and his successors) the empire of the sea, God had given to Germany the empire of the air—that is, of the mind and spirit. But those days passed with the coming of the empire.

The last of the true intellectual and spiritual leaders of Germany disappeared at the middle of the last century; some dying and leaving no successors, others fleeing from the hardening hand of despotism and finding refuge in America, where many of them contributed an element of sterling worth to our mixed population. Not in threescore years has Germany produced one great spiritual leader or indeed one great and free intellectual leader. Her achievements in material science, industry and commerce have indeed been enormous; yet in them she has chiefly appropriated and

adopted as her own the inventions and discoveries of others, her own original work and initiative being contemptibly small. We venture to hope that, freed from the deadly incubus of the sordid, predatory and despotic Hohenzollern empire, the German mind and soul will have "a new birth of freedom" and will measurably regain that former high estate which once made them no small part of the light of the world. If so, the dissolution of the Empire will be no less beneficent to the Germans themselves than to the rest of the world which it frees from the menace of further attempts at conquest.

But whatever is done will not and cannot alter to the extent of one iota the relations between Germany and the rest of the world arising out of the war, nor lessen by so much as the small dust in the balance the responsibility of Germany for the crimes against international law and against humanity that have been committed. The indictment rests, and the judgment will stand, against Germany as it existed at the beginning of and through the war. It will make no difference whether Germany remains a unit as an empire or a republic, or is dissolved into a number of separate states. The penalty of the war must be paid just the same. No state can escape its share by seceding from the empire, any more than the Kaiser could escape responsibility by absconding and abdicating.

Nor can any German state or any part of the German people by leaving and repudiating the empire establish any valid claim to moral sympathy or to rehabilitation in the esteem of mankind. We may recognize a difference between Bavaria and Prussia in favor of the former; we may agree that the Bavarian Government in charging the Imperial Government with lying at the outbreak of the war; and we may regard with approval and with hope the withdrawal of Bavaria and other states from the empire, if they do withdraw. The damning fact remains, however, that Bavaria and all the rest stood firmly with Prussia in the empire during the war; that the Bavarian Government was privy to and acquiesced in the Prussian lies which it now denounces; that Bavaria and all the German states shared willingly in the war and shared eagerly in its loot; and that not one of them would have thought of withdrawing from the empire if the empire had been victorious in the war. So too Hungary stood with Austria in the war, and would have stood with her to the end if Austria had been successful.

ARE WE TO HAVE A "REPTILE PRESS"? 9

We shall welcome the disappearance of the despotic and militaristic German Empire and the rise of a group of free and independent German states, and we shall hope that thus the Germany of the Hohenzollerns and Bernhardis and Tiritzes and Hindenburgs will be transformed into the Germany of Goethe and Schiller and Lessing and Richter. But the former is the Germany with which we have practically to deal, and we shall deal with it inexorably, regardless of whether it mends its ways or remains incorrigible and contumacious in its sins. Repentance might indeed command consideration and commutation of sentence if our policy toward Germany were merely punitive. But it is not. It is not intended to demand one cent of punitive fine, but merely reparatory indemnity. The purpose is to restore the victim, not to punish the criminal, and that purpose cannot be balked in any degree by any eleventh hour reformation on the part of Germany or of any of its members. On the contrary, we must hold it to be essential, in order to make Germany's repentance real and worthy of recognition, that she "bring forth fruits meet for repentance"; and such fruits must comprise not merely renunciation of the criminal empire but also payment of the fullest possible indemnity for the empire's crimes.

ARE WE TO HAVE A "REPTILE PRESS"?

THE question should be uncalled for. It should be so superfluous as to be offensive. But it has been forced upon us by recent incidents and utterances in a way which it is impossible to ignore. Hint after hint has been given, step after step has been taken, until at last the culmination is seemingly reached in the direct suggestion—from a source which we are not prepared to identify but which was certainly not devoid of plausibility—of the organization of an "official press." Are we, then, to have a "reptile press" as the consummate flower of a paternal government?

We cannot ignore the significance of the President's action more than two years ago, when he abandoned the long established and salutary practice of giving collective interviews to the representatives of the press in Washington. His predecessors had been glad to show themselves to the assembled correspondents, sometimes as often as every day, and to

say a few words upon matters of public interest; and even on some occasions to talk at length personally with individual correspondents. But in the very midst of the Great War, at a time when our own relations with Germany were becoming so strained that our entry into the war became daily more probable, and when a single phrase or word from the President would have been of inestimable interest, he shut himself absolutely away from all contact with the men upon whom the nation had to depend for information concerning the progress of public affairs, and a little later ceased to receive individual newspaper men. We have it upon the authority of that writer who is perhaps his most earnest advocate and most ardent defender against hostile criticism, that not once since May, 1916, has the President met correspondents collectively, and that not once in the past year has he received one of them individually.

This attitude of aloofness cannot be attributed to any reluctance toward publicity, since the President has repeatedly assured us that a desire for the fullest possible publicity for all governmental business is one of the dominant passions of his life. Neither can it be explained on the ground of lack of time, for he has often been engaged in trivialities at the very hour when such a meeting with correspondents would have been most desirable. There remains, then, the explanation which has been given by his journalistic eulogist already quoted, to wit, that he does not think the people are—or, shall we say, ought to be?—interested in public affairs. For we are explicitly told that he refuses to consider the activities of the press as manifestations of the desire of the people for information on public affairs, but rather of the mere idle curiosity of individual reporters.

There may be, also, this explanation of an explanation, that he thinks that the people ought to be satisfied with the creelings which are officially emitted from the Committee of Public Information, and ought not to ask more. We remember that at about the time when he adopted the policy of shutting himself away from newspaper men the President, deliberately discussing the war which had then been going on for nearly two years, declared that "With its causes and objects we are not concerned. The obscure fountains from which its stupendous flood has burst forth we are not interested to search for or explore." Perhaps he applied that same rule to the public in its attitude toward his adminis-

tration and its policies; holding that with them it was not concerned, and that it should not search or explore beyond the boundaries of the "Official Bulletin" provided by his creel.

The unfortunate impressions which were inevitably produced by this course of the President were recently much deepened by two almost simultaneous incidents, of official origin. One of these was the sudden and unexpected taking over by the Administration of the various transoceanic cables and wireless telegraph systems. This was done, of course, as a war measure. It could not have been done otherwise. Yet it was not done until the President himself had assured us that the war was ended. There had apparently been no need of it during many months of strenuous warfare, when need of most cautious supervision of all means of communication with Europe was plausibly manifest. But as soon as the enemy surrendered and the armistice was signed, the President, or his Politicalmaster General, perceived a most imperative need for it. It may, of course, have been the purest coincidence, absolutely accidental, that it was just at that time that the President decided to go to Europe to impress his policies upon the Peace Conference. It may be that between the two there was not the slightest relationship. But this is an incredulous and skeptical world, containing many former residents of Missouri.

The other incident was the sending of Mr. George Creel and his staff abroad to be in Paris during the President's visit and during the sessions of the Peace Congress. There was an instant and natural assumption, which we cannot regard as either extravagant or unwarranted, that this Committee on Public Information was to exercise some sort of censorship, control or supervision over the transmission of news to this country. If not, indeed, why should Mr. Creel go over there at all? True, it has since been announced that there will be no censorship and no bar on news. Official government business will have the first place for transmission; news will stand second; and commercial and miscellaneous business will come last. That is as it should be. Yet we assume that messages sent by Mr. Creel, as of the Committee on Public Information, will be classed as official business and will thus have the preference over mere newspaper correspondence; and we can imagine a possibility of his having so much to send at a given time that press matter would be badly delayed.

It is further announced that "the machinery of the Committee on Public Information will be used entirely to facilitate the work of the American newspaper representatives in Paris." If, for example, the Congress should decide to hold its meetings in secret, excluding the correspondents, Mr. Creel might, as a sort of *ex officio* member of the Congress, serve as the medium through which accounts of its doings, "elaborated" in his well known and justly esteemed style, might leak out to the otherwise baffled pressmen. For such service the representatives of what he calls "nasty newspapers" would doubtless be most grateful. Even our Congress would rejoice to get its news of the peace-making deliberations by the grace of the courteous gentleman who publicly likened its heart and mind to slums.

We repeat that this train of incidents, colored throughout by the attitude of the President himself, irresistibly and quite warrantably provokes wonderment as to whether the Socialistic and paternal policy of the Administration, in addition to Government ownership of railroads, ships, telegraphs, telephones, coal and iron and copper mines, oil wells, water power, forest, and Heaven knows what not, comprises also government control of the newspaper press. If so, more than ever we demur. The American people demur to any proposal for a "reptile press." It was not for nothing that the founders of the Republic placed the freedom of the press among the fundamental principles upon which the nation is based; and we do not believe that the nation to-day is any more minded to abandon that principle than it is to abandon trial by jury or the electoral franchise.